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ABSTRACT

A study was conducted at Macomb Community College (MCC), in Warren, Michigan, to determine whether respondents to studies would be as likely to include their return addresses on business reply envelopes if there were no lines designating the return address's proper placement. From October 25 through November 18, 1993, 23 mailings were conducted using return envelopes with lines for return addresses and envelopes without lines. Envelopes were bundled by the date they were received and counted into four categories: lined with addresses, lined without addresses, unlined with addresses, unlined without addresses. Of the 1,646 lined and unlined envelopes received during the 16 day study period, a total of 56% (n=919) had return addresses. The lined reply envelopes produced a return address rate of 71% (898 out of 1,267 lined envelopes), while only 5% (21 out of 369) of unlined envelopes had return addresses. Of the 919 envelopes with return addresses, 24% (n=218) were changes of the address that appeared on the survey label. Because it is the ancillary function of the Research and Evaluation department to keep MCC's student database current, the conclusion was reached that business return envelopes should contain lines for return addresses. By changing addresses based on return address information, MCC saves time and money by not mailing to incorrect addresses. (MAB)

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Macomb Community College

RETURN ADDRESS STUDY REPORT

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REPORT ON RETURN ADDRESS STUDY
Department of Research & Evaluation
Macomb Community College

BACKGROUND

During the months of October and early November, 1993, the Department of Research & Evaluation at Macomb Community College conducted 23 mail surveys (including subsequent mailings). While mail dates and return deadlines varied, they often overlapped. The combined N for all surveys mailed was almost 23,000; information is shown in Table 1.

TABLE 1
SURVEYS CONDUCTED BY R&E
DURING MID-OCTOBER/EARLY-NOVEMBER, 1993

TITLE	#Mail1	#Mail2	#Mail3	Tot
PROE[1] Business				
Advisory Cmte	147	90	--	237
Business Faculty	51	--	--	51
Business Students (selected)	1878	1878*	--	3756
Grad 1 Follow-up	3168	2675	2388	8231
Grad 5 Follow-up	2633	1700	--	4333
Grad 3 Follow-up	2846	2201	--	5047
Medical Ofc Asst (Student)	37	11	--	48
Special Services (Student)	837	--	--	837
Respiratory Therapy				
Faculty	10	--	--	10
Graduates	15	--	--	15
Employers	20	--	--	20
Respiratory Resources				
Students	32	21	--	53
Faculty	15	11	--	26
Secretarial Employers	275	--	--	275
TOTAL	**11964**	**8587**	**2388**	**22939**

*Repeated entire list because of mix-up in mail room.

In the midst of the extraordinarily heavy survey period cited above, an innocent remark that we get many more return addresses if a lined space is available for a return address on the business reply envelope provided the stimulus for this study. The speaker suggested, tongue-in-cheek, that students (generally the majority of our intended audience) are just used to "filling in the blanks."

[1]Program Review in Occupational Education

R&E 93-086

During this period, we had several problems with the mail room which necessitated a third mailing for one major survey and a second (unplanned) mailing for another, thus increasing the N by more than 4,000.

METHODOLOGY

Since we were using two different types of business reply envelopes--those with lines for return address and those without--(See Figures 1 and 2) it seemed a good opportunity to test the idea about return addresses. From October 25 through November 18, we kept all return envelopes; envelopes were bundled by the date they were received in this department, and each bundle was marked with the receipt date.

According to the receipt date, envelopes were counted into four categories:

1. Lines with return address
2. Lines with no return address
3. No lines with return address
4. No lines and no return address

Finally, percentages were calculated for the "line" categories (1 and 2 above) and the "no line" categories (3 and 4 above). Grand totals were calculated for each day along with totals for all envelopes with return addresses, and percentages of the total with addresses. Likewise, totals and percentages were tallied for the entire 16-day period.

RESULTS

Out of 1,646 business reply envelopes received during October 25-November 18, we had an overall return address rate of 56%, i.e., 919 had return addresses regardless if the envelopes had lines or no lines.

However, when the rate was calculated by line envelopes vs. no line envelopes, the differences between the different kinds of envelopes were statistically significant: lined reply envelopes produced a return address rate of 71% (898 return addresses out of 1,267 lined envelopes) compared to a return address rate of just 5% of unlined envelopes (21 out of 369 envelopes without lines). The complete tally is presented in Table 2.

Return addresses are important to us for reasons other than meeting suggested postal guidelines. If an address is changed on the envelope or on the survey label, it is clipped, recorded and forwarded to the Registrar's office where appropriate records are updated with the new address. This follow-up saves a considerable amount of money for the College, since the Registrar's database is

FIGURE 1
BUSINESS REPLY ENVELOPE WITH LINES
FOR RETURN ADDRESS

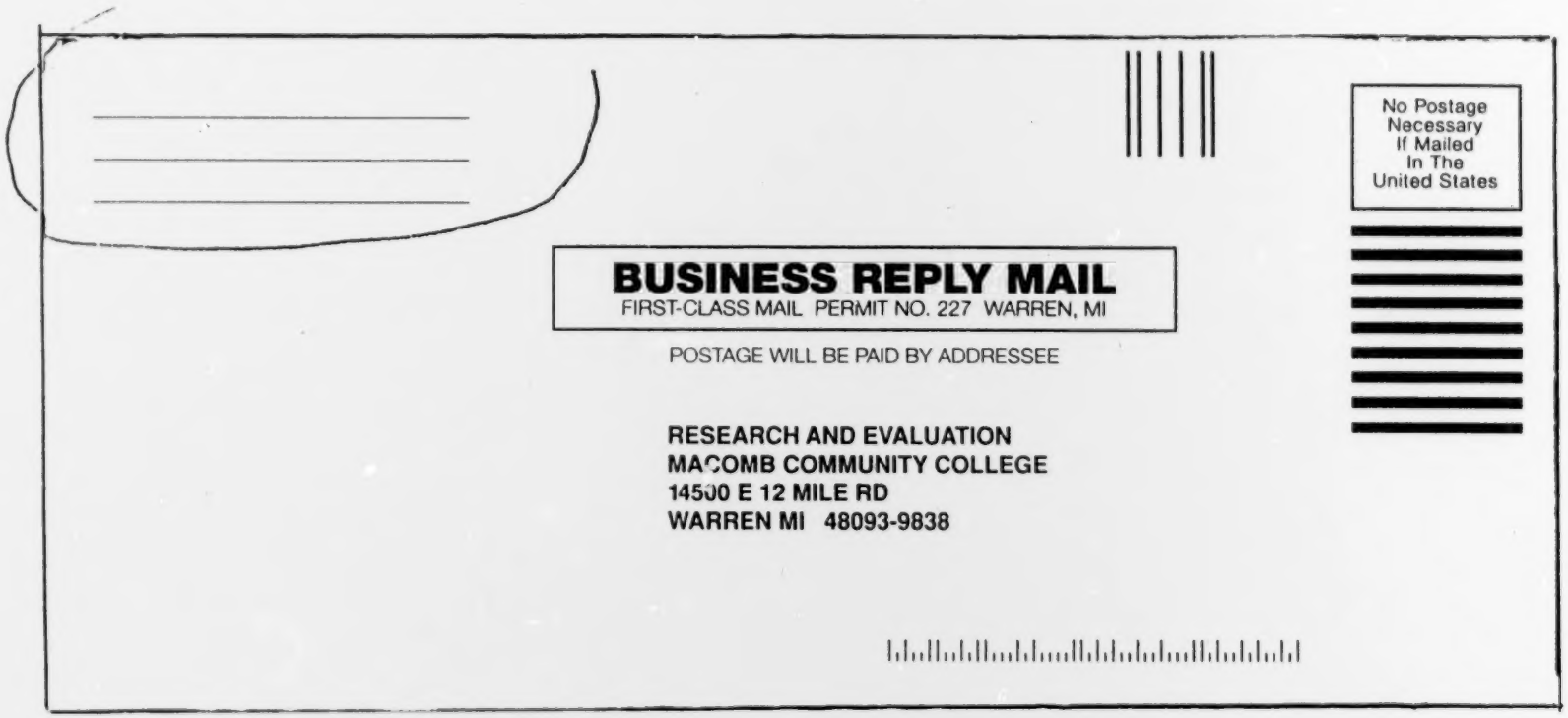

FIGURE 2
BUSINESS REPLY ENVELOPE WITHOUT LINES
FOR RETURN ADDRESS

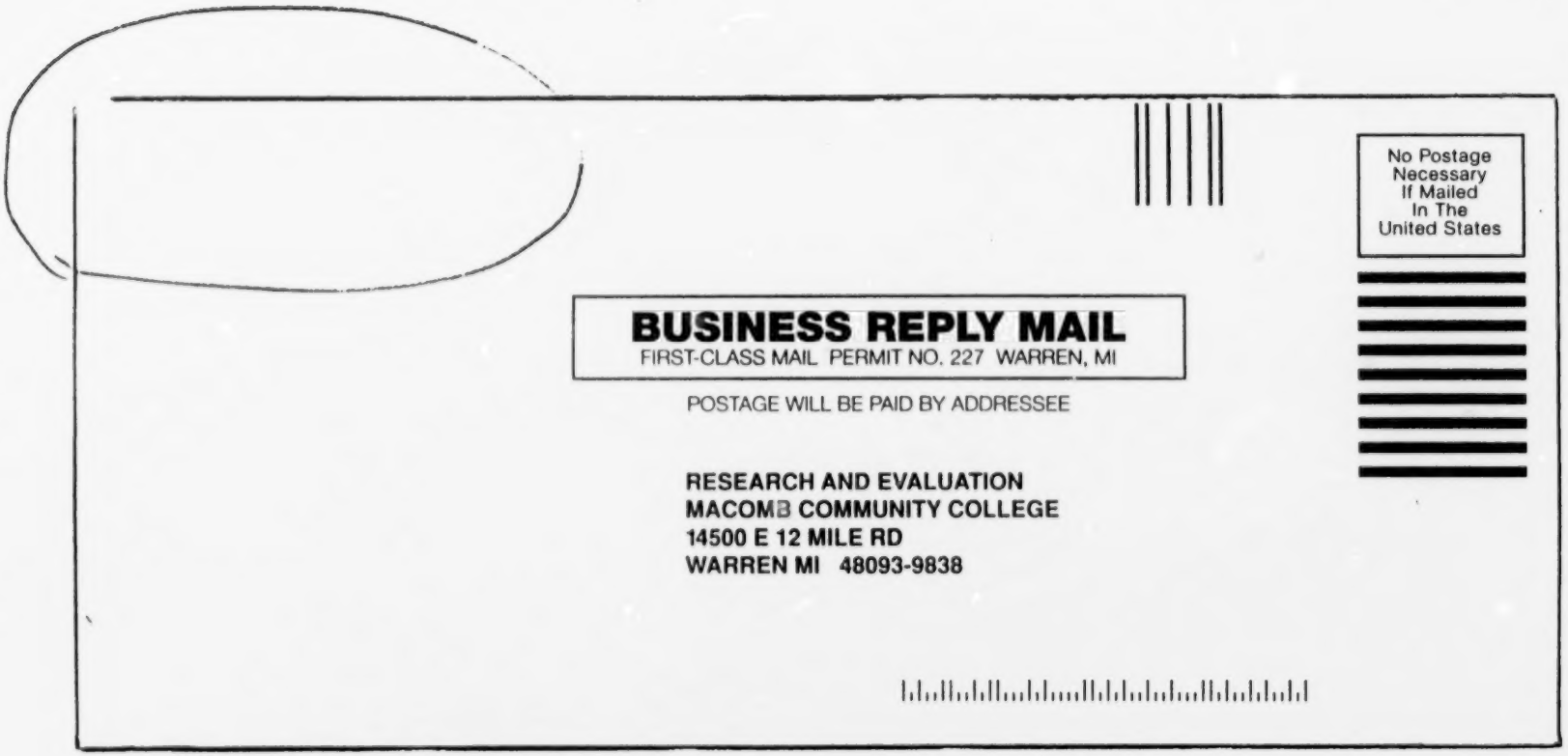

TABLE 2
RETURN ADDRESS TALLY

REC'T DATE	LINES WITH ADDR	LINES W/O ADDR	TOT LINE ENV	% WITH ADDR	NO LINES WITH ADDR	NO LINES NO ADDR	TOT NO LINE ENV	% WITH ADDR	GRAND TOT RET ENV	TOT WITH ADDR	% RET ADDR
10/25	61	23	84	72%	0	38	38	0%	122	61	50%
10/26	87	24	111	78	4	70	74	5	185	91	49
10/27	45	28	73	62	1	37	38	3	111	46	41
10/28	114	45	459	72	1	40	41	2	200	115	58
10/29	48	25	73	66	2	22	24	8	97	51	52
11/1	29	10	39	74	0	9	9	0	48	29	60
11/3	41	16	57	72	0	9	9	0	66	41	62
11/4	135	56	191	71	3	57	60	5	251	138	55
11/5	106	38	144	74	1	22	23	4	167	107	64
11/8	44	18	62	71	2	13	15	13	77	46	60
11/10	102	29	131	78	6	12	18	33	149	108	72
11/12	11	3	14	79	0	6	6	0	20	11	55
11/15	23	10	33	70	0	7	7	0	40	23	75
11/16	27	23	50	54	1	5	6	16	56	28	50
11/17	18	14	32	56	0	5	5	0	73	18	49
11/18	7	7	14	50	0	6	6	0	20	7	35
TOTAL	**898**	**369**	**1267**	**71%**	**21**	**358**	**379**	**5%**	**1646**	**919**	**56%**

used to produce mailing labels for any number of purposes and/or departments.

In addition, a copy of the changes is kept on file in R&E, and we spot check future labels to make sure changes have been made. If addresses are invalid, the labels are pulled before processing so that we don't get those back as "non-forwarding," i.e., the addressee is unknown or a forwarding order has expired.

Out of 919 envelopes with return addresses, 24% (218) were changes from the address indicated on the survey label. A complete breakdown of returns is presented by date in Table 3. On a daily basis, changes ranged from 46% of return addresses to 8% of return addresses.

TABLE 3
CHANGE OF ADDRESS FROM RETURN MAIL

DATE	# Ret Addr	# Chg of Addr	TOT	%
Oct 25	61	5	66	8%
Oct 26	91	21	112	23
Oct 27	46	14	60	30
Oct 28	115	29	144	25
Oct 29	50	16	66	32
Nov 1	29	9	38	31%
Nov 3	41	19	60	46
Nov 4	138	18	156	13
Nov 5	107	22	129	21
Nov 8	46	9	55	20
Nov 10	108	30	138	28%
Nov 12	11	5	16	45
Nov 15	23	4	27	17
Nov 16	28	11	39	39
Nov 17	18	5	23	28
Nov 18	7	1	8	14
TOTAL	**919**	**218**	**1137**	**24%**

These figures in Table 3 do not include surveys that are returned as "non-forwarding."

CONCLUSIONS

The information presented above and in tables 2 and 3 clearly indicates that it is necessary, even critical, that business return envelopes contain lines in the upper-left-hand corner for return addresses. It is an important ancillary function of the work in Research & Evaluatior to help keep the College student database current. It not only saves us work and money as a department, in that we don't send mail to addresses we know are incorrect, but it saves the College considerable amounts of postage costs if this information is corrected in the database.

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